





WORCESTER - FRIEND OF PEACE BALTIMORE, 1816











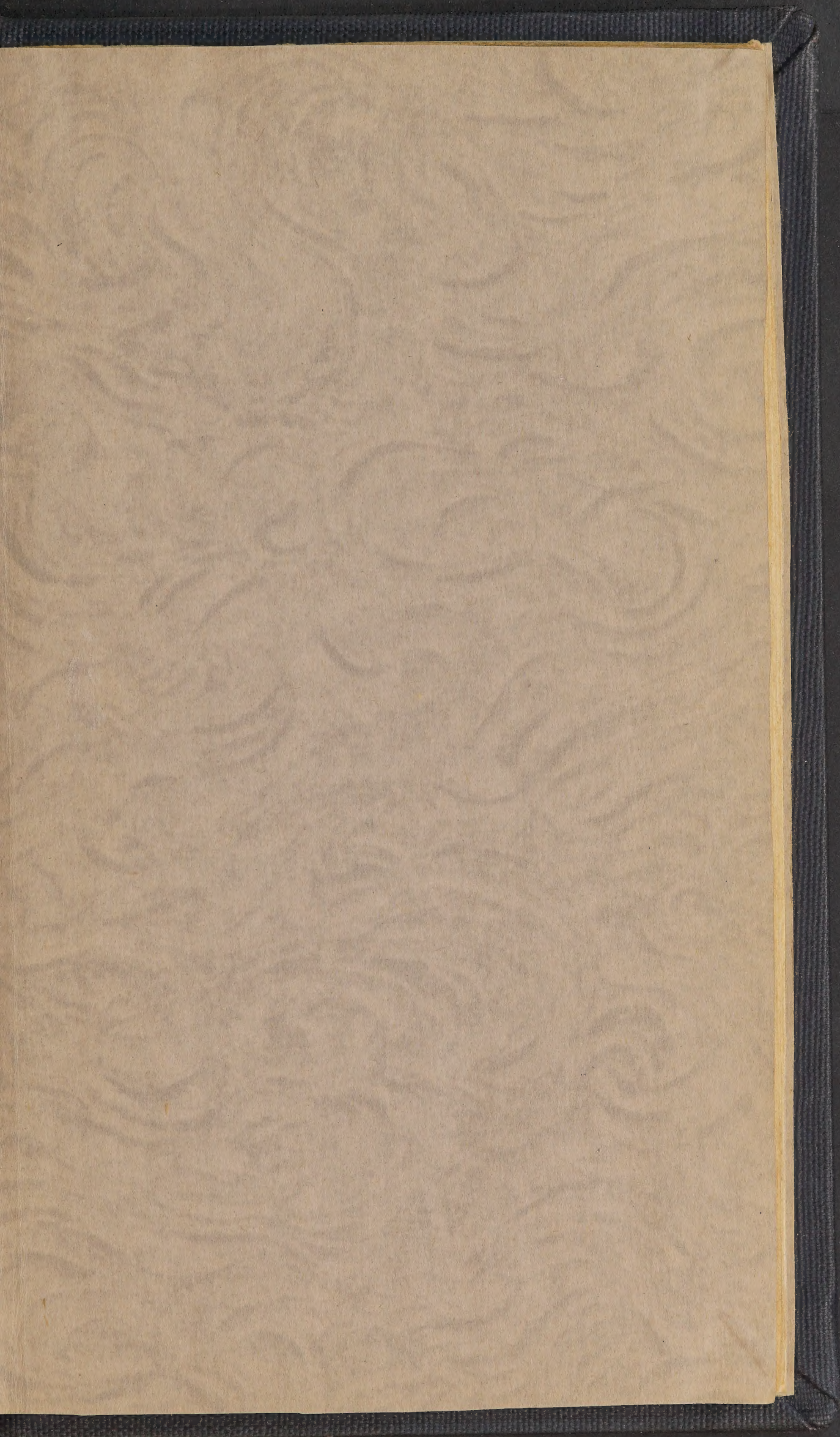
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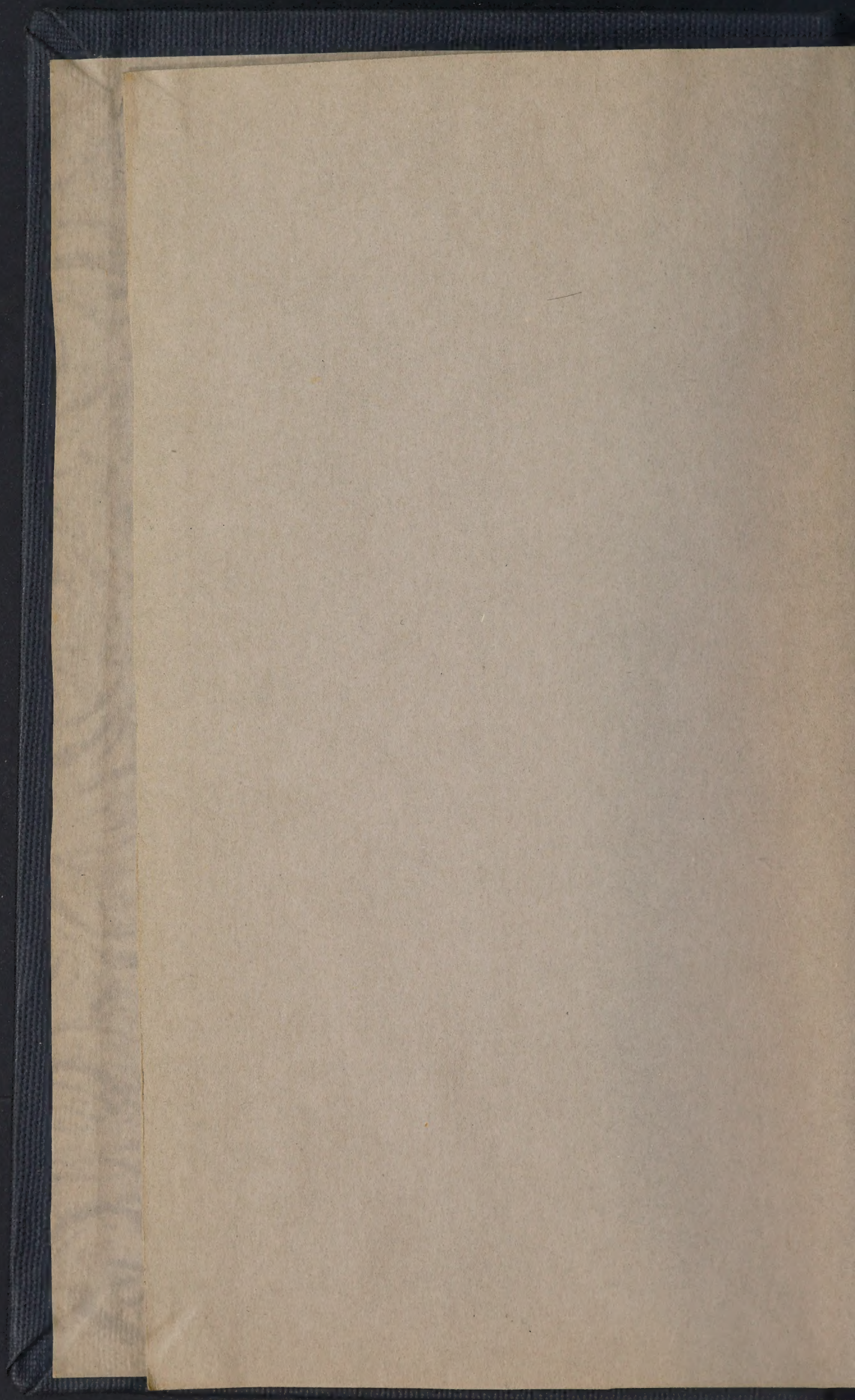
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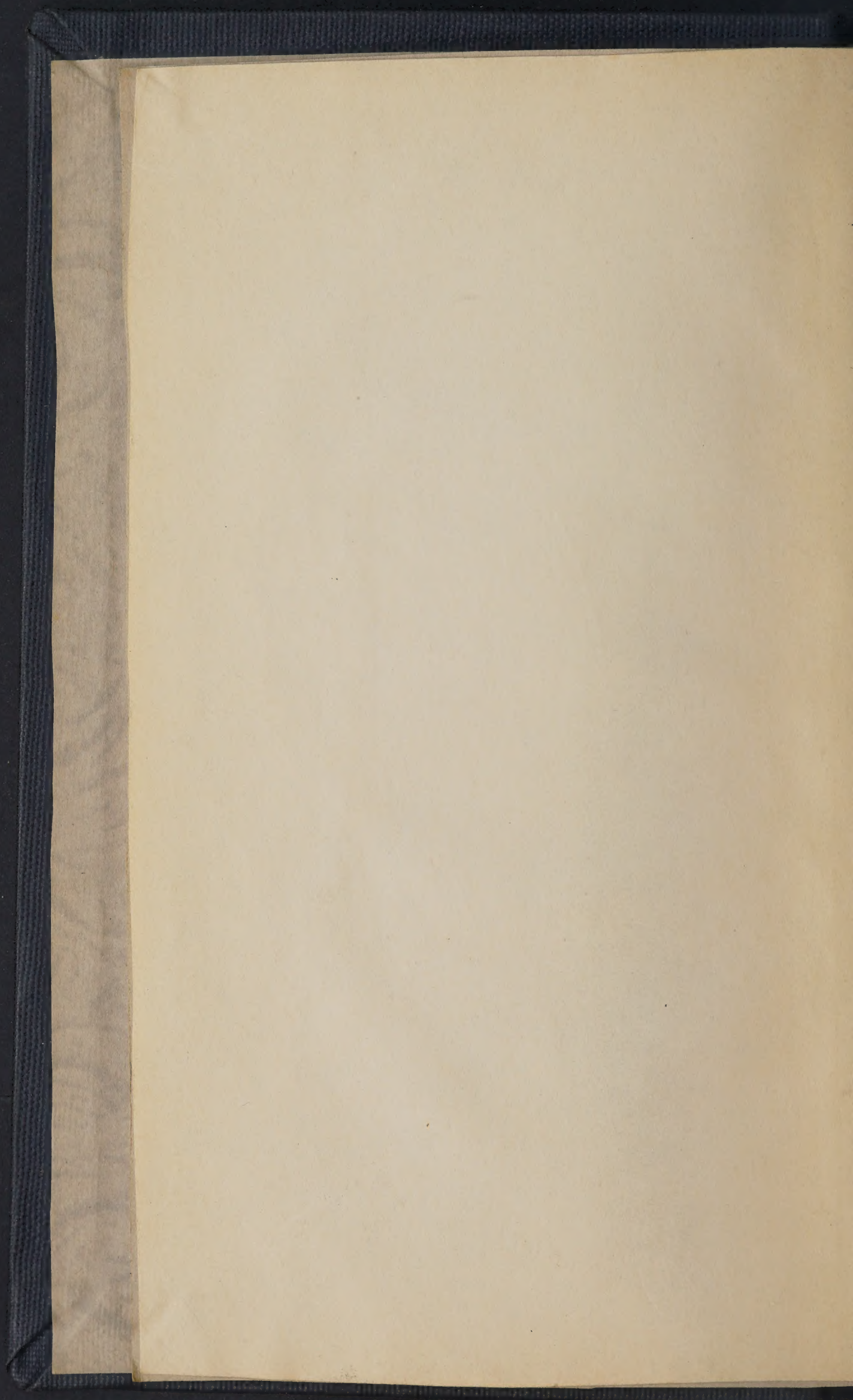














THE  
**FRIEND OF PEACE:**

No. I.

CONTAINING

**A SPECIAL INTERVIEW**

BETWEEN

THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES AND OMAR,

AN OFFICER DISMISSED FOR DUELLING;

**SIX LETTERS**

FROM OMAR TO THE PRESIDENT;

WITH A

REVIEW OF THE POWER ASSUMED BY RULERS OVER THE LAWS  
OF GOD AND THE LIVES OF MEN, IN MAKING WAR,

AND

**OMAR'S SOLITARY REFLECTIONS.**

THE WHOLE REPORTED.

BY PHILO PACIFICUS,

*Author of "A solemn review of the custom of War."*

Only by pride cometh contention.....*Solomon.*

Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.....*Paul.*

**BALTIMORE:**

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## FRIEND OF PEACE.

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A SPECIAL INTERVIEW BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES AND OMAR, AN OFFICER DISMISSED FOR DUELLING.

*President.* Your countenance, sir, I think I have seen before, but your name I do not recollect.

*Omar.* May it please your excellency, I am Omar, the man who was lately an officer in the military service, and who was dismissed for some concern in an affair of honor. I have for some time been desirous of an interview on that subject.

*P.* It was painful to me, to issue the order for your removal. I had no personal animosity against you; but I had become convinced, that unless something could be done to check that needless and inhuman custom, many valuable men would lose their lives, without any service to their country.

*O.* I was indeed offended, when I was informed of your determination; but afterwards I took the matter under serious consideration, and became fully convinced that duelling is a wicked, unwarrantable custom, which occasions the sacrifice of many lives, and the distress of many families, without any benefit to community. I therefore entirely approve your conduct in removing me from office, and thank you for your fidelity.

*P.* I am much pleased to see in you a disposition so friendly and magnanimous. Your views of duelling are clearly correct. I sincerely wish they may become universal, that human lives may no more be sacrificed to false principles of honor. You, my good friend, now stand on fair ground to be eminently useful in preserving the lives of valuable members of society, by an effort to open their eyes to the enormity of a custom, which has made such deplorable inroads among men of rank. No one disputes your valor, and as you



have become convinced of the evil of the custom, your influence may go far towards its abolition. Only render the custom disreputable, and it will wither away like a weed pulled up by the roots and exposed to the heat of the sun. Popularity is the only element in which such a murderous custom can thrive, or even live among men of reflection. To save your fellow men from untimely death, is an object which your benevolent mind will pursue with ardor. And any aid which it may be proper for me to give, will not be withheld.

*O.* I thank you, sir, for the kind sentiments you have expressed. I think I should be willing to exert myself to put an end to duelling, if I could see a fair prospect of success. But you are aware, sir, that the prepossessions of many gentlemen, especially in the southern states, are very strong in favor of the custom. Should I write or speak much on the subject, I shall probably be dubbed with the title of *puritan* or *fanatic*, and bring on myself much reproach, without being able to do any considerable good.

*P.* A man of pure mind and benevolent heart, has little to fear from being called a *puritan*. As to *fanatics*, I am not acquainted with any persons more deserving that name, than those who will wantonly sacrifice their own lives, and the lives of others, to false principles of honor, without even the prospect of benefit to themselves, their families, or their country.

*O.* I feel the force of your remarks. I am disposed to do what I can to preserve men from untimely death; but I must rely on your patronage.

*P.* Of that you may feel assured, in so good a cause. I have long lamented the prevalence of duelling, but I never saw before so fair a prospect of opposing it with effect. I am determined to bear a decided testimony against it, while I hold the presidency, by dismissing every military officer in the army or the navy, who shall be guilty of giving or accepting a challenge, or of instigating others to such a combat. I indeed hope, that what has been already done will prevent a repetition of such murderous folly, for I have no wish for an occasion to express my displeasure against military men; but my resolution is fixed. They must forbear, or be dismissed.

*O.* Decision in this particular will, I think, make a powerful impression; and it is a fortunate circumstance, that the Prince Regent of Great Britain has adopted a similar course. This places the military officers under both governments on the same ground;



and the co-operation of different governments for the same benevolent object, will render the efforts doubly efficacious.

*P.* You remember the impression which was made on the public mind, by the fatal duel between General Hamilton and Colonel Burr. I think a very great portion of gentlemen at that time would have been really glad to see the custom fairly set aside. Many, I am persuaded, feel as Hamilton did, as to the propriety and morality of the custom; and would never comply with it, if any thing could be done, which, in their view, would free them from odium in a refusal. Now, as the custom wholly depends on a delusive opinion, like that which formerly prevailed of burning heretics, any measures which may be adopted to change the opinions of those who favor the custom, will tend to its abolition. Would it not then be wise to form societies, in which the subject should be fully discussed, and whose object should be to effect a revolution in the opinions of that class of people who regard the custom as honorable?

*O.* Such a plan, I think, would have a happy tendency. I know of a number, who sincerely regret that the custom was ever adopted; and who, I think, would cheerfully associate for the purpose you propose, could they only be headed by some powerful character. The project would be greatly favored by this circumstance, that the sentiments of serious people in general, and indeed of a vast portion of the community, are already so decidedly opposed to the custom, that they would rejoice in any effort to bring it into universal disrepute. In New England the custom is generally regarded with abhorrence, as a *priviledged mode of murder*, assumed by gentlemen, in violation of the laws of justice and reason, as well as the laws of the land. Thousands, in perhaps every state, view the matter in the same light, and the more it is examined, the more it will be abhorred. Could we only obtain the concurrence of twenty persons, such as I could name, to unite with the mass of the people already prepared for the enterprise, I think it would be possible in twenty years, to render the custom of duelling as perfectly odious, as that of horse stealing.

*P.* "The power of reasoning," says Dr. Reid, "in those who have it, may be abused in morals, as in other matters. To a man who uses it with an upright heart, and a single eye to find what is his duty, it will be of great use; but when it is used to justify what a man has a strong inclination to do, it will only serve to deceive



himself and others. When a man can reason, his passions will reason, and they are the most cunning sophists we meet with." It is by the reasoning of "the passions," these "cunning sophists," that gentlemen persuade themselves that they may be justified in exposing their own lives, and the lives of others, in the custom of duelling. If they would lay aside their passions, and reason impartially, they would easily see, that it would be as justifiable in any other class of citizens, even in women and children, to adopt a murderous mode of settling controversies, as it is in them. Yet they would now use their influence to have other people hanged for imitating their own example. It is indeed amazing that men of sense can be thus bewildered by the influence of their passions, and popularity of a barbarous custom, which had its origin in an age of savage manners. What security would be given to the lives of gentlemen, and from what anxiety would their families be relieved, if this custom should become disreputable among that class of men! The fate of Hamilton and Burr is a solemn lesson to all men of reputation who favor the custom. Burr succeeded in killing the object of his envy, but what has been his own fate? What advantage has he gained? Before the duel he sustained a high rank in society, but since, like his predecessor Cain, he has been a vagabond in the earth.

*O.* The public have no occasion to thank Colonel Burr; yet I am of opinion that his duel has had a favorable influence against the practice. Indeed I have believed that my dismissal was occasioned by the influence which that event had on your mind, and the minds of others. But still I rejoice in the issue. It has been useful to me, and I hope it will be so to others. Various circumstances concurred to make the duel of those men serviceable in the way I have mentioned. Hamilton was unquestionably one of the most eminent men in the nation, in the view of both political parties. His fall occasioned a shock like that of an earthquake, and prepared the minds of the multitude to listen to whatever was said against the custom. The clergy availed themselves of this opportunity, to express their abhorrence of the practice, and to exhibit it in the most odious colors; and what they said was listened to with seriousness and gratification. The trivial nature, also, of the offence, which Burr made the ground of the challenge, was calculated to lead people to regard his conduct with detestation.



*P.* Another thing may be mentioned, which had great effect—the deliberate testimony which Hamilton gave in writing against the custom, as immoral and murderous. This testimony was evidently written with a kind of presentiment that the duel would cost him his life. That a man of his giant mind should be seduced by popular opinion, to comply with a custom, which he conscientiously believed to be wicked, was truly extraordinary. Judicious and reflecting persons could easily perceive by the writing which he left, that the convictions of his own mind were decidedly against the custom, as of a barbarous and immoral character; and that his compliance was the effect of what he believed to be the popular opinion among gentlemen of honor. He evidently sacrificed his own life to an opinion which he believed to be erroneous, and to a custom which he regarded as abominable.

The offence, on which the challenge was given, was indeed of a trivial nature, compared with the mode of obtaining redress. At a time when party spirit is prevalent in a community, as it then was and is now, if such things as Burr made the ground of the challenge, may be regarded as sufficient to justify a duel, fifty thousand may be fought in this country every year. And if every class of people may follow such examples, as surely they may if commendable, the custom would sweep the land of its inhabitants like a general plague. No person would be secure from falling a victim to the prejudices and passions of some political opponent. Men of rank should certainly consider what would be the consequences, if all other classes of community should follow their example, in making thus light of human life. Indeed the offences in general, on the ground of which duels are fought, are hardly worthy of the notice of a man of a noble and magnanimous mind. They are generally the ebullitions of passion and prejudice, to which all men are liable, and none more so than duellists. The custom is so far from being honorable, or a compliance with it an indication of a generous mind, that it is an indication of petulance and malignity unbecoming any man of honor. By a conformity to this custom, men do not even rise above the most petulant and ferocious of the brute creation. They fall far below the magnanimity of the mastiff, who can hear the barking of twenty snappish curs, without breaking his trot or being moved so much as to turn his head to notice them.

The custom of duelling cherishes and gives scope to the vilest passions of the human heart, renders men bloody and ferocious on



principle, and tends to exterminate the kind affections, which are most essential to social happiness.

To see men of rank thus trifle with human life, must naturally have considerable effect on the other classes of society. It must excite abhorrence, or inspire them with similar feelings and sentiments. The more, therefore, this custom prevails, the greater must be the insecurity of human life, the greater the corruption of morals in society, and the more a blood thirsty disposition will prevail through the land.

*O.* Your excellency will excuse my weakness——

*P.* You seem, sir, to be oppressed with grief, or some other emotion, for which I cannot account.

*O.* *Regret, shame, admiration, and astonishment,* have all combined, and overcome me. I regret that I ever gave the least countenance to a custom so sanguinary. I am ashamed that I so long remained blind to the obvious dictates of reason and religion, and that I suffered my mind to be seduced by the sophistical reasoning of the passions. I was struck with admiration at your manner of expressing the real sentiments of my own heart. I may truly say, as honest and illiterate individuals often say on hearing an eloquent, intelligent man, “you have expressed my views of the subject better than I could have expressed them myself.” But I was also *astonished*.

*P.* What excited your astonishment?

*O.* I was astonished, that while you see so clearly the immoral nature, and the demoralizing and fatal tendency of duelling, you have not seemed aware how easily your remarks might be applied to another custom, which has been still more popular, and more destructive.

*P.* You mean probably the ancient custom of killing men for their religious opinions, when they happened to dissent from the creed of the majority.

*O.* No, sir; that is not the custom I had in view, but one as unreasonable, and more destructive to the lives of men. Perhaps at an earlier moment of our interview I should have disclosed more fully the result of those reflections, to which I was led by being removed from office. But I have felt a delicacy in the affair, and some fears lest I should say something which would not be so acceptable to your excellency, as what I have said on a custom which we mutually abhor.



*P.* The ingenuous and amiable spirit you have displayed, in regard to your removal from office, has gained my confidence and esteem. You may speak without reserve. I think I shall hear with patience, and I hope with impartiality.

*O.* To be frank, sir, when I had reflected on the moral nature of duelling, and become fully convinced of its injustice and enormity, I was then led to compare this custom with that of war, for which also I had been an advocate. The more I pondered, the more I was struck with the similarity of the principles, on which the two customs have been supported. On the whole, I became fully convinced, that war has no advantage of duelling in respect to its being *necessary, justifiable, or honorable*; and that it is as much worse than duelling, as it is more destructive to the lives of innocent people.

*P.* You surprise me, sir! Are you not aware that war has been admitted for the settlement of national controversies, in all ages and all countries, as far back as history extends?

*O.* I am, sir: But had duelling been as uniformly and universally admitted, as the best method of settling disputes between individuals, would that amount to proof of the propriety of the custom?

*P.* It would not. There is, however, a striking dissimilarity in the two cases. Duelling results from the folly and rashness of presumptuous individuals, who assume a right to expose their own lives, and to destroy one another. But war is made by *lawful authority*, by the deliberate counsels of the rulers of a nation.

*O.* Suppose then, that the rulers of a civilized nation should deliberately authorize duels, as the best mode of deciding private controversies; would this abate the malignant and odious nature of the custom? And would not such a set of rulers be justly considered as barbarians?

*P.* Be this as it may; you will admit that the *offences*, for which wars are declared, are of a more serious nature, than those for which duels are fought.

*O.* No, sir, not always. One half the wars in christendom have been declared without any real offence at all, or on as frivolous pretexts as challenges are given by duellists. Offences may be called either great or small only by comparison; and to make a fair estimate in the two cases, we should compare the offences with the probable consequences of an appeal to arms. The offences for which duels are fought appear trifling, compared with the probable and the possible consequences of seeking redress by a challenge. When a duel



is to be fought for the decision of a private dispute between two gentlemen, it is *probable* that *one*, and *possible* that *both* the combatants will be killed, and that one or both of their family connexions will be subjected to mourning and woe. Now certainly it must be an offence of a more serious nature than usually occurs, to justify an appeal to pistols or swords, with such awful prospects as the result; and it is in this view of the matter that the usual pretexts for duels appear altogether insufficient and trifling.

*P.* This is granted.

*O.* Well, sir, in the present state of the civilized nations of christendom, when a war is declared, it must be done with a *probability* that sixty thousand lives will be sacrificed, and a much greater number of families subjected to severe affliction; and with a *possibility* that ten times this amount of suffering will be the consequence of making war. In what instance, then, has a war been declared, when the offence was not trifling, compared with the probable and possible consequences of an appeal to arms? The challenge for a duel exposes but *two* lives; the declaration of war as really exposes a hundred thousand. Are then the offences for which war is usually declared, a hundred thousand times greater, than those for which challenges are given? If not, they are very insufficient to justify war.

*P.* But the *honor* of a nation will not allow a government to submit to insult or aggression. If they submit in one case they may in another; and every instance of submission is an invitation to renewed insult. It is of the highest importance to a nation, that its rulers should be ever ready to vindicate its *honor* by an appeal to arms.

*O.* And what, may it please your excellency, does all this amount to, but the plea of a duellist from the lips of a ruler? You have admitted that duelling is practised in support of *false principles of honor*, and that the sacrifices thus made are wanton and needless. But an appeal to arms in vindication of honor, is no more necessary on the part of a nation, than on the part of a military officer, or any other gentleman. The delusion is the same in both cases—dishonorable and ruinous sacrifices are made to a *phantom* called *honor*, while TRUE HONOR is but little regarded.

*P.* But what could the rulers of a nation do in a case like ours before the late war? We complained of wrongs, repeated and urged our complaints over and over again, but the British government forbore redress till our patience was exhausted.



*O.* What would you advise a gentleman of honor to do in a similar case? His brother has insulted him, or said something by which his honor is wounded. The complainant has repeatedly stated his grievances, but redress is delayed. Would you advise him to send a challenge, and then, if he can, blow a ball through his brother's heart? Would you also advise him to kill off half a score of his brother's family, who never have done him, nor even wished him, the least injury?

*P.* Not so! this would be horrible; but you have not given a direct answer to my question; *what could have been done to avoid the war?*

*O.* THE VERY SAME, SIR, THAT WAS DONE TO MAKE PEACE. Nothing more, I think, could have been necessary. Such a treaty as we now have, had it been made before the war, would have saved all the sacrifices of blood and treasure on both sides of the contest. And your excellency will not deny, that such a treaty might have been obtained before the war, at less expense than the support of one of our commissioners at Ghent.

*P.* But the war has *raised our national character*, and evinced that other nations are not to injure us with impunity.

*O.* May it please your excellency, I admit that the war has raised our national character just as a duellist raises his own character when he gives a challenge, *fights bravely*, injures his antagonist, receives a wound which must be a burden for life, and then makes peace without any other concession or recompense.

*P.* I will not impute to you any unfriendly design, but your remarks *seem* to have a bearing against me as president of the nation.

*O.* Be assured, sir, that nothing unfriendly or disrespectful has been or will be intended by me. I have been myself an advocate both for war and duelling. The measures you adopted to check duelling, were the occasion of my present views on both subjects. On the subject of duelling we are now perfectly agreed. I wish to recompense your favor to me, by convincing you that war and duelling are equally unjustifiable.

*P.* It would be awful to me, to think of the havoc of lives during the late war, should I become of your opinion. I think however, no person acquainted with me can say, that I am naturally of a malignant and sanguinary character. Some circumstances had influence to induce me to consent to the war, which it may not be proper to name. But of this you may rest assured, that I did not



consent to the war under a conviction that the *custom of war* was murderous and unjustifiable, as General Hamilton consented to a duel with Burr.

*O.* By what he supposed to be the popular opinion, General Hamilton was induced to think that, all things considered, it was better for him to comply with a custom which he believed to be immoral, than to refuse. And although your excellency had not been convinced that the custom of war was unjustifiable, yet some respectable characters have been of the opinion, that you consented to the war, not so much from a conviction of its justice, as from a desire to gratify some others, and to give scope to what you thought was the popular feeling. But whether this apprehension be correct, I pretend not to say. I believe that your friends in general do not impute to you a sanguinary character.

*P.* I verily thought, and still think, that we had received injuries from Great Britain; I supposed the custom of war to be justifiable; and I had reason to think that the war would be popular with that part of the nation which raised me to the presidency. The war has not, indeed, produced all the benefits I hoped for; but peace is again restored, and I regard it as a blessing.

Your remarks on war have made some impression on my mind. If I have been in an error, it is of a serious nature, and I wish to know the truth. But the evening is far spent. If you wish to make any farther communications to me on the subject of war, will it not be best to do it by letter? In this way you will have opportunity to set your arguments in the strongest light, and I shall have opportunity to examine them with greater attention and advantage. Whatever may be the result, I will read with care, and endeavor to weigh your reasoning in an even balance.

*O.* Both your candor and your proposal strike my mind agreeably. I shall reflect on them with pleasure, and I think I shall write, for my heart is filled with the subject, and from the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks, and the pen moves with ease. You may probably think me an enthusiast; but my enthusiasm leads me to endeavor to save men's lives, and not to destroy them. Such enthusiasm I would gladly diffuse through the land, and through the world. Should it become as general and as ardent, as has been the destructive enthusiasm for war and violence, our present peace will never be interrupted. Without the least hesitation, I submit to the good sense of your excellency one question, and with that shall



close, on my part, the present agreeable interview—Which is the most to be commended and encouraged, an enthusiasm to *save*, or an enthusiasm to *destroy*?

*P.* You do me justice in believing, that I cannot hesitate in so plain a case. Farewell, my very good friend, farewell.

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## SIX LETTERS FROM OMAR TO THE PRESIDENT.

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### LETTER I.

SIR,

ENCOURAGED by your generous proposal, I now take my pen to express to you more fully my convictions and my views relating to war.

Your excellency is aware, that ardor of mind leads to the use of strong language, in expressing opinions, and in making remarks on what is believed to be inhuman and unjustifiable. But whatever language my enthusiasm to save the lives of men may lead me to adopt, I beg you would consider my letters as written with the same feelings of friendship and respect, which you observed in me during the late interview. I do not consider you, or any of the rulers of our nation, as under any greater mistake on the subject of war, than what has been common to the rulers of other nations, and to people in general; and whatever bearing my remarks may have on the late war, they will not proceed from enmity to any person concerned in that lamentable affair. My object is, if possible, to prevent a recurrence of a similar calamity, by exposing what I believe to be the misapprehensions from which wars have originated. I do not pretend to say, that we had not as good ground for declaring war against Great Britain, as has been generally found by war-makers in past ages, and other countries. By examining history I have become fully convinced, that the pretexts for war have generally been of a very trivial character; and that the real objects of war have commonly been concealed under a huge proclamation of pretended injuries, or of some real injuries artfully and wantonly exaggerated. Having premised these things I now proceed to the intended remarks.



Your excellency removed me from office, because you had become convinced, that unless a check could be given to the custom of duelling, many valuable men would lose their lives; without any service to their country. This I admitted as a sufficient reason against duelling, and for your treatment of me. But for a similar reason I object to wars, and wish the custom abolished. Let us, sir, examine the subject fairly, and inquire whether the lives lost in war are not sacrificed "without any service to their country." We will look at some of the most celebrated wars.

Alexander the Great was a wonderful war-maker. In his wars a vast multitude of men lost their lives. But what advantage to Macedon, or to any other country, were the sacrifices made to the ambition of that celebrated conqueror? Did he not distress his own country, as well as every country he invaded? Were not more lives lost in his wars, than have been lost in all the duels since the day that "Cain slew his brother?" And what more advantage resulted to any nation from the loss of lives in the wars of Alexander, than from those which have been sacrificed in duelling?

Not needlessly to multiply examples, we will now come down to our own times. No nation probably in our day has sacrificed more lives in war than the French. Napoleon was another Alexander, and he kept a large portion of the French nation dressed in mourning, or oppressed with grief during his reign. Has France, sir, been benefited by this immense sacrifice? That people have indeed obtained the name of being *brave to fight*. But is not this nearly the sum of their *gain*? Let this be compared with the *loss*. Will the *credit* of fighting bravely, cancel the *debt* of millions of lives sacrificed, and the distress of more millions of mourners? If not, it may be presumed that France is no gainer by the wars of Napoleon. Then add to the loss, the misery he occasioned in the countries he invaded, and what shall we say of that destroyer? Was he not truly "the scourge of God," and the greatest *curse* Europe ever endured in one man?

We will now, sir, come nearer home. In the late war with Great Britain, we have probably lost a hundred fold more lives than have ever been lost by duelling in our country, since its first settlement. And, pray sir, have not these lives been lost "without any service to their country," except such *honor* as a duellist acquires by fighting bravely, after he has given a challenge? But is this honor an



équivalent for the loss of thirty thousand of our countrymen, and the destruction of as many more on the part of Great Britain? Does this honor heal the breaches made in thirty thousand families? Does it dry up the tears of mourning parents, widows, and orphans? Does it cancel the debts contracted by the war, and relieve the people from the burden of taxes? Does it place the thousands in comfortable circumstances, who were made bankrupts by the war? Does it insure the bliss of heaven to those who have died in battle?

One question more in this connexion. Would your excellency have given your *own life* to have secured to the nation every benefit that has been obtained by the war? If not, at what rate do you value the lives of those who have perished, if you say the war has been a benefit to the nation?

Yet, sir, I will not say, that no benefits are likely to result from the war. As the war between Hamilton and Burr was the occasion of exciting abhorrence to the custom of duelling; so I believe the late war will serve to open many eyes, and be the occasion of bringing this "needless, inhuman custom" into disrepute. Some farther remarks may be expected in future letters.

In the mean time, I am, &c.

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## LETTER II.

SIR,

You think the custom of duelling is so far from being honorable, that by complying with it, men do not "rise above the most petulant and ferocious animals," and that they "fall far below the magnanimity of the mastiff." This perfectly corresponds with my views of the conduct of rulers in making war. You will then permit me to ask, Should not the rulers of a nation display as much magnanimity as you wish to see in military officers and private gentlemen? Ought they not to equal the mastiff in magnanimity? Shall we then censure the duellist for a private combat, and justify a ruler in plunging a whole nation into the miseries of war?

You speak of the *honor* of a nation as of vast importance. I admit that it is so; but in what does the honor of a nation consist? Does it consist in being *quick to resent and brave to fight*? If honor



be composed of such ingredients, why do you discountenance duelling? Why do you not rather wish the whole nation to be trained up to that mode of displaying valor! A nation educated as duellists would unquestionably be quick to resent and brave in battle.

But, sir, does not the honor of a nation result from the display of intelligence, prudence, integrity, justice, benevolence, magnanimity, forbearance, prosperity, and happiness? Let these ingredients of national character be displayed before the world, and the revengeful, fighting character will soon be abhorred.

If such things as I have named be the principal things which render a nation truly honorable, is it not manifestly as false a notion of honor which hurries a nation to make war, as that which disposes a duellist to give a challenge? And is not making war, in effect, making a sacrifice of almost every thing which properly belongs to national honor? Are the rulers of a nation acting an honorable part, while manuring the earth with the blood of its inhabitants? Yea, with innocent blood? Is it truly honorable for them to offer human sacrifices to their own ambition, or to the savage phantom, called honor? Is it honorable for rulers to corrupt the morals of community, and fill their country with poverty, distress, lamentation and woe? If this be honorable, what could be dishonorable?

You justly object to duelling, that it is of a demoralizing tendency. I object the same to war; and I may boldly affirm, that in this respect, it is far worse than duelling.

You think duellists ought to consider what would be the consequences, if all the people of other classes should imitate their example in making light of human life. But are duellists more chargeable with making light of human life, than rulers who make war? You can be at no loss for the proper answer to this question.

"If duellists were not deluded by the reasoning of their passions," you think "they would see that all other classes of community have as good a right as they have, to adopt a murderous mode of deciding controversies." This was well said, and it may with propriety be repeated, with only changing the word *duellists* for *rulers*—"If *rulers* were not deluded by the reasoning of their passions they would see, that every other class of citizens have as good a right as they have, to adopt a murderous mode of deciding controversies."

If we take a moral view of the subject, and examine it apart from passion, prejudice, and custom, it will not be easy to see, why a



murderous mode of deciding controversies would be more criminal in any other case, than in the contentions of rulers of different nations. Why may not different towns in the same state, or different families in the same town, or two individuals of the same family, follow the example of their rulers in this particular? Only let a custom become popular in either of the other cases, and it will puzzle a Jesuit to tell, why it is more immoral, or more inhuman, or more offensive to God, than for the rulers of nations to adopt the same mode.

It may indeed be said, that in civilized communities the laws provide for the settlement of controversies between towns, families, and individuals, so as to preclude the necessity of an appeal to arms. This is true; but it is equally true, that the laws of reason and religion provide for the settlement of disputes between nations. Will you plead that these laws do not insure that a nation shall, in all cases, obtain its rights without an appeal to arms? The same, sir, is true of civil laws in relation to the other cases. May I not safely add, that of all modes for obtaining rights, which were ever invented by men, there is not one more uncertain than that of war? To decide a question of right by lot, or the cast of a die, would be as sure of doing justice, as a decision by war, and infinitely less expensive, and more honorable.

It is easy to see that if it should become fashionable for towns and families to settle their disputes by war; force, and violence, and fraud, and skill in the use of arms, would become a substitute for reason and justice, and be made the standard of right and wrong. No certainty could exist that right would be obtained, or wrongs redressed, by such decisions. It would, however, be very certain, that wrongs would be multiplied without number, and that the weak and the innocent would fall a prey to violence and injustice. But as awful as it may be to think of, every particular in this description is strictly true, when applied to wars between nations, as a mode of deciding controversies or of obtaining rights.

In truth, sir, I am not acquainted with any species of violence, or fraud, or injustice, or robbery, or piracy, by which the laws of rectitude are more wantonly violated, than they are by the usages of war. If the laws of rectitude and the rights of humanity are not violated by the custom and usages of war, then robbers, pirates, and murderers may safely plead, "*not guilty.*" For what species of



violence or villany is committed by these hardened wretches, which is not *authorized* by rulers in making war? Killing the innocent, and violently taking or destroying property, are in fact the employments *appointed* for military men by war-making rulers.

Your excellency observed that duellists would "use their influence to have people of other classes *hanged* for imitating their own example, in adopting a murderous mode of deciding controversies." May not this remark be emphatically applied to rulers who make war? Do they not cause private citizens to be hanged for deciding quarrels by slaughter and violence? And yet, is not this the mode in which they decide their own quarrels? While they authorize and justify the violent slaughter of the innocent, in their own disputes with the rulers of other nations, they will punish with death similar acts of violence in the private quarrels of their subjects or fellow citizens!

"To see" rulers "thus trifle with human life," in their own quarrels, "must naturally have considerable effect on the other classes of community." To this influence, sir, in my opinion, is to be ascribed the far greater part of all the private murders and robberies which take place in the world. Men who are trained up to robbery and murder by the custom of war, may be expected to *follow their trade*, and not always to wait for the word of command from those in authority. It requires more skill in the science of *Jesuitism*, than such men generally possess, to see why it is more criminal for them to kill in their *own* quarrels, than to do the same act in the quarrels of their rulers; or to see why they may not rob and plunder the innocent for their own benefit, with the same propriety as to rob and plunder for the benefit of others. When, therefore, by the custom of war, men have become hardened in vice, inured to crime, and habituated to acts of public authorized butchery and robbery, can it be wonderful if their own wants and inclinations should lead them sometimes to commit similar acts in a more private and unauthorized manner? Indeed, sir, when it shall be duly considered, how much is done by the custom of war, to corrupt the morals of community, and how many men are trained up to bloody and desperate enterprizes; the greater wonder will be, that private robberies and murders are not ten times more frequent than they are now known to be in the world. It is, however, to be observed, that men who are accustomed to the violence of war and to military discipline very well know, that rulers will applaud acts of violence



and inhumanity in one case, and punish them with death in another; and that there is no safety in robbing and murdering, except when it is done in *obedience to the orders of government*.

### LETTER III.

SIR,

WITH great propriety your excellency observed of duelling, that "popularity is the only element in which such a murderous custom can thrive, or even live, among men of reflection;" and that "only let the custom become disreputable, and it will wither away like a weed pulled up by the roots, and exposed to the heat of the sun."

The very same, sir, may be as truly affirmed of the more destructive custom of war. It is popularity which keeps this custom alive; it is this which produces the barbarous enthusiasm, to revenge, and to destroy. Let war become disreputable, let an enthusiasm to save the lives of men be excited, and the custom will soon be abhorred, as "a privileged mode of murder," under which rulers have assumed the right of exposing the lives of their own subjects, and of slaughtering the subjects of another nation.

Suppose, sir, that prior to the late war, the people of this country had viewed the custom of war with the same abhorrence that you now do the custom of duelling: Would the war have been declared? Or had it been declared under such circumstances, would not you and some others, have known before this time, as well as I do, what it is to be dismissed from office, for being concerned in "a needless and inhuman custom?"

Without any ill will towards your excellency, or any other man in office, I may state another question: Would it not "give a check to the custom" of war, if the people of every nation should adopt your summary mode, and dismiss from office every man who shows a disposition to involve his country in the miseries of war? The Prince Regent of Great Britain and the President of the United States, have adopted a very laudable method to check duelling. Let the people of the two nations so far imitate the examples of their chief magistrates, as to resolve, that henceforth no person shall be continued in any office of honor or profit, who shall appear as an instigator of war. Then war and duelling will be placed, as



they ought to be, on similar ground; and both, I hope, "will wither away like weeds pulled up by the roots and exposed to the heat of the sun."

You proposed the formation of societies to discuss the subject of duelling, and to employ their influence to effect a revolution in the opinions of those who favor the custom as honorable. In this proposal I cordially acquiesced. I may now in my turn propose the formation of societies to discuss the subject of war, and to attempt a revolution in the opinions of those who favor this custom. As a thousand lives are sacrificed by war, to one by duelling, there seems to be a thousand fold stronger inducements in the former case, than in the latter. As I said of duelling I may say of war, "the more it is examined, the more it will be abhorred."

Should peace societies be formed, several points will demand their attention.

In the first place it will behove them to investigate some mode for effecting a reformation in the manner of conducting newspapers—some mode which shall make it for the interest of editors to exclude from their papers every thing of a vindictive and inflammatory character; and to give the preference to such things as are of a pacific, friendly, and uniting tendency.

No species of publication has more influence on the state and morals of society than newspapers, and none which should be conducted with more care, and with purer motives. It is principally by inflammatory and libellous publications, that society is agitated. enmity excited, and a disposition for war produced. Free and candid discussion should be encouraged, but such things as tend to inflame the minds of people with enmity, or a war spirit, should be discountenanced by every virtuous member of society. For when the passions of a community are inflamed, reason has lost its control, and such measures will naturally be adopted as passion shall dictate; and these are commonly such as involve deplorable calamities. Let newspapers be made the vehicles of correct information and pacific sentiments, and the thirst for blood will abate, and the custom of war will lose its popularity. I might say more on this point, but your own reflections will supply many defects.



## LETTER IV.

SIR,

I HAVE already hinted at one thing which would demand the attention of peace societies, should such be formed. I shall now observe, that it would also behove them to inquire, whether the most fatal delusions do not exist respecting *national honor, true patriotism, and the right or power of rulers to make war.*

By what I have already said, your excellency has an idea of my views of national honor. I may however add a few thoughts on this point.

The opinion which has been entertained of *valor, or bravery in battle*, as an *honorable virtue*, was evidently borrowed from the pagans, and not from the gospel of Jesus Christ. Fortitude to *suffer wrong*, and to meet even death itself in the path of obedience to God, rather than to *do wrong, to avenge ourselves, or to render evil for evil*, is the valor recommended by the precepts and the example of the Prince of Peace. This is a virtue, opposite in its nature and tendency to that vindictive valor, so much extolled by pagans and mahometans, and by such christians as prefer pagan morality to that inculcated by the gospel.

The followers of Jesus were to resemble the harmless sheep and lambs, and not wolves and tigers. But many who have professed to be christians have gloried in a resemblance to ferocious animals. Nor have they been contented with equalling the wolf and the tiger, in a blood thirsty disposition. They have far surpassed them. The wolf and the tiger are generally contented with devouring animals of different species from their own; and these they attack, not so much to acquire honor by bravery in battle, as to procure something to satisfy their hunger, and to feed their young. It is believed they have seldom been known to exult in the premeditated slaughter of hundreds of their own species.

But men, yea, men calling themselves christians, are not contented with butchering innumerable other tribes of animals, for food, clothing and other uses, but they even make what they regard as an *honorable trade, a professional employment, of killing one another.* This conduct is believed to be peculiar to the human race, and to have no parallel in the history of other beings, in heaven, on earth, nor even in hell. Men glory in their dignity above the beasts of the field, the fowls of the air, and the fishes of the sea; but whether



their making a trade of destroying one another, is to be regarded as an excellence, as something which contributes to the honor of our race, let conscience and common sense determine. If it be not an honorable distinction between us and other tribes of creation, it is unquestionably something which deserves the abhorrence of every intelligent being.

In our estimation of wild animals, we most abhor those which are most fierce and blood thirsty; yet we extol that in men, as an honorable virtue, which renders other beings objects of our abhorrence. We cannot see a hawk kill a chicken, nor a wolf kill a lamb, without feelings of commiseration for the sufferer, and feelings of indignation or detestation against the destroyer. Yet we can extol as a *virtue* the obdurate, unrelenting, revengeful and ferocious bravery, with which men can butcher one another in war.

If Satan had been appointed or permitted to dictate to christians what they should regard as honorable virtue and national honor, could he have suited himself better, than by proposing the very things, which are now so popular in christian nations? Could he have invented any thing, which would have insured more slaughter of mankind by the hands of each other?

If in the view of God, men are to be regarded as *virtuous*, because they have arrived to such a pitch of hardness, inhumanity, and ferocity that they can bravely slaughter one another; and if, in his view, the *honor* of a nation may be raised, by a display of this kind of virtue; then as soon as these things shall be satisfactorily proved, we may be certain that Jesus was an impostor, and that Mahomet had higher claims to be regarded as a teacher sent from God. But at the same time another conclusion will force itself on the mind, in respect to the moral character of Jehovah, which is too horrid to be expressed.

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#### LETTER V.

SIR,

PATRIOTISM is another thing which requires examination. Like the delusive terms "Liberty and Equality," as used in the French revolution, and often with a view to cover the basest designs; so the word *patriotism* is frequently in the mouths of vindictive war-makers, as a charm, to hurry men to destruction. As patriotism means "love of one's own country," we surely ought to under-



stand by it, love to the lives, the privileges, the virtue, the peace, the prosperity, and the happiness of the community of which we are members.

But as valor and skill in the work of human butchery, are now regarded as the *cardinal virtues*—and as the *honor* of a nation is supposed to be exalted by a display of such virtues; so patriotism is made to consist in an enthusiasm to support government, in making and carrying on a war, which gives opportunity for the display of the wonderful virtues, and to exalt the glory of a nation.

One man ardently wishes to preserve his countrymen from the miseries of war, and from the folly and madness of sacrificing their lives to the pagan idol *honor*—and would sooner lay down his own life to preserve the peace of his country, than be an instrument of involving it in the sins and calamities of war—He is considered as no patriot, but rather as an enemy to his country.

But another man loves his country *so well*, that he is willing to sacrifice fifty or a hundred thousand of his fellow citizens in war, rather than to endure any insult or injury from a foreign power—Here is patriotism, which will raise a man to the skies! No language is sufficient to express his praise! But if this may be called patriotism, it is patriotism with a vengeance against the best interests of his own country—a patriotism which calls evil good and good evil, and which is *murderous* in proportion as it is *ardent*.

Such love of country is like the love of the papists for the pagans, whom they converted with the sword, killing off one part of a nation, and subjecting those to slavery who chose to be *baptized* rather than *slain*. While these *lovers* of the pagans pretended to bless them with the gospel of salvation, they either deprived them of life, or of the blessings which render life desirable. In a similar manner, the popular patriotism blesses a nation with the honor of being brave to fight, but it is at the expense of killing off a large number of the citizens, and subjecting the survivors to poverty, taxation, mourning, and woe; and not unfrequently to the chains of despotism.

My mind has been so engrossed with my subject, that I had almost forgotten that I was addressing your excellency; but your candor will excuse such inattentions as may have resulted from an enthusiasm to save the lives of men, and to preserve my country from another war. My present views of patriotism were not cast in the popular mould; but I think, should they prevail, they will be



found conducive to the tranquility and happiness of mankind; and this is an object worthy to be sought with ardor. Should you doubt the correctness of my views of patriotism, I wish you to compare them with the patriotism of the Savior of men. At present I feel disposed to regard HIM as my pattern, rather than those I formerly followed. However much he might have been insulted, he would not, I think, have *fought a duel*, to vindicate his honor; yet few persons have displayed more intrepidity of character, than appeared in him. Nor do I think he would have advised a ruler to plunge his nation into the horrid abyss of war, that its *virtue* might be displayed, and its *honor* advanced, by bravely slaughtering the innocent people of another country. And is it not a circumstance worthy of some notice, that in pronouncing his benedictions, on virtuous characters, such as the "merciful," the "peace makers," &c. he omitted to say—"Blessed are the war makers; for they shall be called true patriots."—This omission has impressed my mind with a belief, that the common encomiums on fighting men, are not very sure passports to the joys of heaven, nor much to be relied on as recommendations to divine favor.

In my next, I intend to give a brief illustration of the mistakes relating to national honor, virtue, and patriotism.

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#### LETTER VI.

SIR,

IN my last, I promised an illustration. You will recollect the allusion you made in our interview, to the custom of our ancestors in putting men to death for a dissent from the majority in religious opinions. That custom will favor us with a striking illustration of the points before us, and of the fatal consequences which result from false notions of *honor*, *virtue*, and *patriotism*.

In former ages, when the custom prevailed to which you alluded, it was supposed that the *honor* of the christian church required, that dissenters from the orthodox faith should be put to death; and that by such sacrifices the *purity* of the church was preserved, and its *honor* secured and advanced. Having imbibed this false principle respecting the honor of the church, our ancestors were very naturally led to another most dreadful mistake—namely, that a flaming zeal to destroy supposed heretics, was love to the honor and best interests of Christ and his kingdom. By these two false prin-



ciples, the peace and happiness of the church were in a great measure destroyed, and millions of lives were sacrificed.

Your excellency will agree with me, that the honor of a christian church results from the display of mutual love, fidelity, forbearance, and kindness, among its members, in conformity to the commands of their Lord and Savior; and not from making such havoc of each other's lives, on account of some differences in opinion. You will also agree with me, that those ancient christians were under an awful mistake, in supposing that their *burning zeal* for the slaughter of dissenting brethren, was any thing of the nature of that *love* which Jesus required of his followers, and which he himself exemplified.

I may now appeal to the good sense of your excellency, and ask, Were these ancient mistakes respecting the honor of the church, and love to its best interest, any greater than the mistakes which then prevailed, and which still prevail, respecting the honor of a nation and love of country? And have not the latter mistakes occasioned a hundred fold more desolation and misery than the former?

Is it not, sir, a fact, that in every sanguinary custom which was ever popular among men, some false notion of *honor* has been established, with corresponding ideas of *virtue*? Is not this as strictly true of every other sanguinary custom, as of duelling, and burning men for their religious opinions? I believe, sir, that on reflection, you will be convinced, that such is the truth of facts; and that most of those who have ridiculed the fanaticism of papists and protestants of former ages are themselves, as really fanatics in regard to the custom of war, the honor of a nation, the virtue of fighting bravely, and love of country. The custom of war is supported by a fanaticism *as black*, and *as bloody*, as any that can be named. You will remember who said, "As to *fanatics*, I am not acquainted with any persons more deserving of that name, than those who will wantonly sacrifice their own lives and the lives of others, to false principles of honor, without any prospect of advantage to themselves, their families, or their country:" Nor is it possible for you to deny that more human lives have been thus wantonly sacrificed in war, than by every other species of fanaticism, that ever existed on the face of the earth.

For a long period of time, the papal clergy claimed the right of condemning men to suffer death, who happened to dissent from their



creed. This conduct, I presume, you disapprove; and you probably wonder how clergymen could be so deluded, as to imagine they had any such right; and how other classes of people could be prevailed on to submit to such daring usurpation, over the consciences and lives of men. But there are questions, which every protestant ruler may well address to his own conscience;—What right have I to entice, or to compel those under my government, to arm themselves with weapons of death, and enter the ranks of an army, for the purpose of slaughtering the unoffending subjects of a foreign government? Is not the power I assume over the lives of men, as positively unjust and inhuman, as the power assumed by the papal clergy?—And is it not wonderful that any intelligent community can be so deluded, as to think I have of right any such power.

This subject, sir, I could pursue, had I leisure for the purpose; but to save some labor to myself, and still do what I can in this all-important cause, I shall enclose with this, a copy of a “Review of the power assumed by rulers, over the lives of men and the laws of God, in making war.” This Review was written by a person with whom I have some acquaintance; but, I believe without any expectation that it would ever fall into your hands. I am, however, permitted to send it to you on this condition, that you should be informed that the writer intended the piece as a *general review* of the subject, without any particular application to the rulers of one nation rather than another, and that it is far from his wish, to excite enmity against the rulers of his own nation. While he thinks they have erred, he wishes them well and hopes they never will err in like manner again.

Your excellency will perceive that the sentiments of the Review, at least many of them, accord with those I have had the pleasure of communicating. If the author is correct on the point he has discussed, as I prevailingly think he is, there is an alarming error in the world on that subject, and a tremendous retribution awaits those who assume the power of *making war*. But your excellency professed a desire to know the truth, and a determination to read with candor, and to judge impartially. This must be my apology, if I need any, for the freedom I have indulged in my letters, and for sending the Review. With sincere desires for your happiness, and a hope that your last days may be your best.

I am, sir, sincerely yours,

OMAR.



A REVIEW OF THE POWER ASSUMED BY RULERS OVER THE  
LAWS OF GOD, AND THE LIVES OF MEN.

THE remarks now to be made will not be designed to diminish the respect which is due to the rulers of nations. Rulers are but men, and like other men they are liable to be so misled by passion, prejudice, and custom, as to call evil good, and good evil. To convince and not to offend is the object in view.

That every one may have opportunity to judge of the power assumed by rulers, a plain case will be stated, which has often occurred:—

The dominions of two governments are separated only by a geographical line. Numerous settlements are made adjacent to the line on each side; and the people of the two states live together as neighbors, friends, and brothers. They often meet in the same house for worship, become members of the same church; intermarriages are frequent; the sons on one side purchase lands and settle on the other; and in a multitude of ways they become united, endeared, and attached to each other.

In time of peace, if a vicious person on one side steals on the other, and is detected, he is punished as a thief; if he maliciously kills, he is hanged as a murderer; and all acts of violence are regarded as criminal. Such is the state of things during peace.

The next news is, a dispute has arisen between the two governments. An ambassador has been insulted, or a question of property or a boundary line has occurred. The dispute is managed in a haughty, menacing tone one side, and thus retorted on the other. Next out comes a flaming manifesto or declaration of war. The peaceful inhabitants, on the different sides of the line, are declared to be enemies to each other; they are required to take up arms and meet each other in the field of battle; neighbor against neighbor, brother against brother, and father against son. All the means which malice can suggest, or ingenuity invent, are adopted, to inflame their passions, alienate their hearts, excite their enmity, and make them forget that they are friends and brethren. They must fight, or be punished as traitors or cowards. They must kill or be killed, and perhaps both.

Now the laws of God are superseded by the declaration of war—  
theft is no longer stealing, nor killing murder. Nay, it is now de-



clared to be just and honorable to plunder and to kill; and he who proves to be the most hardened and successful villain, acquires the greatest share of renown. After the parties have spread for years mutual havoc and desolation through the villages, the sound of peace is heard by those who happen to be alive. The neighbors are required to cease from slaughter; and killing again becomes murder, by the mere mandate of a ruler.

Now we may boldly and solemnly ask, who gave these rulers power to suspend the laws of God, during the war, and thus to sacrifice the lives of men? Who gave them a right to change the relations of these citizens from friends and neighbors to political enemies? Who authorized the rulers to inflame their subjects with enmity, and to arm them for mutual havoc and murder?

Must not that ruler be the subject of strong delusions, or the most perfect insanity, who can suppose that a mandate from himself can dissolve the obligations which men are under to love one another, or absolve them from guilt in shedding innocent blood? Can rational beings be so infatuated by a popular custom, as to suppose, that the mere word of a fallible, and perhaps ungodly ruler, is of sufficient force to annihilate or suspend the laws and authority of God; so as to render that honorable virtue to-day, which yesterday would have been wanton cruelty, and deliberate murder? And that too without any change in the character or condition of the subjects, but what the ruler himself has made!

When I reflect on the power thus assumed by rulers, I find it so perfectly correspondent with Paul's account of "the man of sin," that I have sometimes suspected that he, "who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, and is worshipped," is the spirit and custom of war personified, or the professed christian ruler supporting this diabolical and anti-christian custom. What more power could a war-maker assume, if he imagined himself to be "exalted above all that is called God?" Does he not assume the prerogatives of the Almighty, and even fancy that he can at pleasure suspend or annul the authority of Jehovah? Does he not imagine that he can authorize and render just and honorable, the vilest passions and most horrid deeds? Passions and deeds which the ruler himself would regard as deserving of death, are justified and applauded, because he has interposed a bloody mandate between the peaceful laws of heaven and his deluded subjects. If this be not exalting himself "above all that is called God," it will



be difficult to find any thing on this side the infernal regions, to which the description will apply. And it may be doubted whether there be any thing even there, more abominable, more repugnant to the spirit of the gospel, than those things which are authorized by the custom of war.

In answer to the question, "Whence did rulers derive this enormous power?" some will answer, "Under republican governments, they derive it from the people and the constitution!" Had the people then such power to delegate? Or did they exalt themselves above all that is called God, in pretending to confer such power? Prior to this delegation of power, had *they* a right wantonly to sacrifice their own lives, or, the lives of others? Could *they* at pleasure suspend the law of God during an attempt to kill a brother, or one of God's children? Could *they* thus easily change vice into virtue, and the most daring crimes into feats of honor? Could *they* render justifiable the most murderous passions, as a substitute for that love which God has enjoined? If they had no such rights or powers to delegate, it is folly or madness in rulers to imagine that they possess any such thing! What manifest delusion is this, to suppose that subjects may confer on rulers power sufficient to suspend the laws of heaven!

Either rulers have such power, or they have not. If they possess this power, then killing the innocent during war, and in obedience to the order of the ruler, is not murder. But if they have *not* power to supersede the commands, "*thou shalt not kill*"—"thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," then these acts of killing and every murderous passion must be condemned at the bar of God.

All protestant rulers would deride the pretensions of the Roman Pontiff, who claims power to absolve from guilt, and to grant indulgences to sin; or they would pity the man thus grossly deluded. But in what respects do the pretensions of the Pontiff exceed those of the war-making ruler? In what particular are they more ridiculous, more arrogant, or more heaven-daring? Political Jesuits alone can tell. If men are liable to be punished for their evil deeds notwithstanding the license or the absolution of the Pontiff, so they are notwithstanding the arrogant pretensions of war-makers.

To support the sanguinary custom of war, rulers are obliged to adopt sanguinary laws, which expose the lives of their own citizens. Cowardice in an officer, exposes him to death. Here a capital crime is made out of a mere natural infirmity, and one per-



haps which it was utterly impossible for the officer to surmount. Desertion also is punished with death, even on the part of the aggressor in war. Whether the soldier deserted in consequence of ill usage, abuse from his officers, conscientious scruples in regard to the justice of the cause, or for no reason at all, still he is liable to be shot.

To complete the inconsistency, while the aggressor in the war will punish with death desertion from his own army, he will bribe or entice the soldiers of the opposing army, to commit the same crime.

That such conduct may be consistent with the usages of war, we do not deny; but the propriety of it we may deny with confidence. If desertion from the aggressor deserves death, it cannot deserve less on the other side. If it do not deserve death, the ruler who inflicts the punishment is guilty of unjustly taking human life. If he views the crime as deserving of death, and still will entice others to commit it, what is he but a deluded or an unprincipled mortal?

Similar to this is the custom of employing and punishing spies. Each army will employ spies. And yet if a spy from one army is detected by the other, death is his portion. Now it is a question which God will decide, whether that ruler who will both employ a spy, and punish a spy with death, is not chargeable with blood guiltiness and the most glaring inconsistency.

But the custom of war is itself such a flagrant outrage of the principles of reason, justice, religion and humanity, that it is impossible to support it at all, but by setting aside the laws of God, and adopting rules and maxims of conduct, subversive of his requirements; and by authorizing the very crimes which he has forbidden. Deceit, fraud, and falsehood—theft, robbery, and murder, and every species of impiety and injustice, which God forbids, are authorized by the maxims and usages of war. That love and kindness, which God requires, the custom of war prohibits; and that hatred, violence, and revenge, which God forbids, the custom of war requires.

Unless the laws of nations, the maxims of war, and the authority of rulers, are sufficient to subvert the authority of God, and change vice into virtue, the custom of war must involve the most awful retributions. For it is manifest, that both rulers and subjects, do act on the presumption, that a declaration of war can authorize the most



flagrant violation of the moral law, and the benevolent precepts of the gospel; and that a state of war changes the character of moral actions, so that vice becomes virtue, and virtue vice.

Which of the ten commandments, or of the precepts of the gospel, is not supposed to be, at least, partially suspended during war? Do not men have other gods before Jehovah, while they serve and obey men in defiance of God's commands? Do not war-makers impiously take God's name in vain, and make him a party or an associate in their guilty and murderous enterprizes? Is not the fourth command uniformly and wantonly violated during war? Are not children authorized so far to dishonor father and mother, as even to take their lives, if they happen to be opposed to each other in the contest? As to the four following commands, the maxims and usages of war run thus:—Thou *shalt* kill. Thou *mayest* commit adultery and fornication. Thou *mayest* steal, rob, and plunder. Thou *mayest* bear false witness, slander, deceive, and lie. Thou *mayest* covet thy neighbor's house, his wife, his man servant, his maid servant, his ox, his ass, and *every thing that is his*.

In the same licentious manner the custom and maxims of war subvert or reverse the benevolent and peaceful precepts of Jesus, and authorize every passion and every vice prohibited by the gospel. What then is more deserving of the character of the "man of sin," or of *antichrist*, than the spirit and custom of war? And have we no reason to fear that the judicial threatening, "God shall send them strong delusions that they may believe a lie," has been awfully verified among professed christians, who have had pleasure in this unrighteous custom? Can there be stronger delusions, than those by which men are made to believe, that they are acting in a manner which God will approve, while they support a custom which sets at defiance every precept of his law and his gospel!

We are amazed at the power of delusion in the religious fanatics of Munster, who fancying themselves to be the favorites of heaven, claimed as their privilege the indulgence of every licentious passion, and the right of slaughtering their fellow men, that they might inherit the earth. But what excesses, what inconsistencies, what enormities, can be charged to their account, which have not been equalled or surpassed by war-makers in every age! The deluded king of these madmen assumed no more power over the lives of men and the laws of God, than has been commonly assumed by war-making rulers.



We regard the Algerines as barbarians, pirates, robbers, and murderers; because their modes of warfare are in some respects different from those adopted by christian nations. But these barbarians have their customs as well as other people; and they can plead that their inhuman practices are not only authorized by their *rulers*, but by their *religion*. Their rulers have as good a right to authorize their barbarous conduct, as christian rulers have to authorize the most barefaced violations of the laws of God and the precepts of the gospel. If a christian ruler can, by a war mandate, render violence and murder justifiable, why may not the Dey of Algiers convert the most cruel slavery into a justifiable means of obtaining money? Their mode of warfare is indeed abominable inhumanity; but this is true of the modes authorized by christian rulers.

We reprobate the custom of the Indians, in torturing captives, and scalping the dead. But these are Indian customs, and according to their maxims of war; nor are they more savage, than the indiscriminate butchery of men, women, and children, which has often been authorized by *pretended* christian rulers, on taking a city by storm. In truth, we can find no custom among the most savage nations or the most deluded fanatics, which may not be vindicated with as good a grace, as the custom of christian rulers in making war. If christian rulers will so far agree with the Indian Chiefs, as to authorize the murder of the innocent, let them not reproach the Indians for the far less unjust and inhuman practice of taking the scalps of the dead. To take life from the innocent and the living, is a very serious injury; but to take the scalp from a dead man, does him no harm at all. It is only an Indian mode of glorying in victory; and perhaps as little offensive to God, as the modes often adopted by christians. On the whole, christian rulers should either admit that the established customs of the Algerines and the Indians, are as justifiable as their own, and cease to reproach them for their inhumanity, or begin a reformation at home.



## OMAR'S SOLITARY REFLECTIONS.

## SECTION I.

I HAVE now done writing to the president. What effect my letters may have on his mind, I know not. I hope they will give no offence, for surely none has been intended. He sees the error of duellists, but I fear he will not be easily persuaded to renounce an error which has been sanctioned by his own administration. He is, however, certainly a man of talents, and capable of examining the subject. I cannot but indulge some hope of success.

But alas! how can I hope to convince a *statesman* that war is a wicked custom, while so great a portion of the *clergy* are its advocates! It is surely to be lamented that ever a minister of the gospel was known to approve a custom; which involves every species of guilt which God forbids; and which cannot possibly exist but by the indulgence of a temper, directly opposed to the temper of Jesus.

While different sects of christians have adopted different criterions of the christian character, and pursued a course of exclusive conduct towards each other, how seldom has the benevolent and self-denying temper of the gospel been admitted as the best evidence of true religion! And how unanimous have been most sects of christians in supporting a custom of violence and revenge, by which many thousands of lives are annually sacrificed to the ambition of rulers! Shocking indeed is the thought, but so it seems to have been, that on *no one point* have christians been *more united* than in supporting the very *worst custom in the pagan world!*

But why do I wonder at others? I too was educated under the light of the gospel, except so far as this light was eclipsed by anti-christian opinions and customs. Yet how long did I remain in darkness, bewildered by popular delusions.

O my God, cleanse my soul from all the guilt I contracted by supporting sanguinary customs. Dispose me to be as ready to forgive as I am desirous to be forgiven—as cheerful to obey the precepts of thy Son, as I am to be saved by thy grace through him.

E



## SECTION II.

Let me pause a moment.—My letters are gone out of my hands, and possibly they will be published to the world. How then shall I retain my standing in the church? Shall I not be censured for departing from the faith and practice of our ancestors?

I have however done what I thought to be my duty; and with God I leave the event. While I was a *fighting christian*, my character was supposed to stand fair, although my heart and my hands were defiled with blood. Now I have renounced the fighting character and become a penitent for the blood I have shed, some will probably reproach me as an apostate from the religion of Jesus. But I have no reason to fear worse treatment than he received; and surely I do not deserve better than he deserved, who “came not to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.”

There is such a perfect contrast between the maxims of the gospel and the maxims of war, that I feel amazed and confounded, when I reflect that for ages the great body of the clergy have justified the most sanguinary custom that ever existed among men.—How would the compassionate Savior have appeared at the head of an army, pronouncing a violent philippic, to excite men to revenge and havoc? Or how would he have appeared as a chaplain, praying to his Father to grant success to an army about to engage in the work of vengeance and murder! How opposite this, to the spirit of his command: “Love your enemies;” and to his prayer on the cross: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

Whoever may have been in the right, or in the wrong, in the theological controversies of the present age, how *harmless* have been most of the errors which have been combatted, compared with that enormous practical error, which has been common to all the contending parties? I can hardly think of any error, short of absolute atheism which appears to me more repugnant to the gospel, or more dangerous to the souls of men, than this popular belief, that christians may, in obedience to the gospel, or as followers of Jesus, meet each other in the field of battle for mutual violence and slaughter—and that prior to entering on this dreadful work, they may, on each side, cry to the *Father of mercies* to grant them success in their attempts to butcher one another. Yet this monstrous,



murderous error, like the "*camel*" of the Pharisees, has been swallowed by almost every sect of christians; and that too, while each has been careful to "strain out" some "*gnat*," infinitely less dangerous to the lives, and to the souls of men.

We have indeed many melancholy proofs of the moral blindness and depravity of mankind; but the *popularity of war* among christians, who have the Bible in their hands, crowns the whole, and leaves no room for doubt. "Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace have they not known."

What errors may not christians embrace and support from an improper regard to the traditions they have received from their forefathers! Had the custom of war never been adopted among christians of former ages—had our ancestors kept themselves pure from shedding innocent blood—and expressed a proper abhorrence of war, as it existed among pagans; what horror would the people of this country have now felt, at the bare proposal of settling a national controversy, by an appeal to arms! The thought of settling a parish dispute in the same manner, would not have appeared so shocking and dreadful.

But as the custom of war has been so long popular among christians, and among our ancestors, many perhaps will be more shocked to hear its justice and morality denied, than they would be to hear of the slaughter of a hundred thousand fellow beings, in a battle *bravely fought*.

### SECTION III.

It is a common maxim that "*misery loves company*," and perhaps it is not less so with *error* and *vice*. When persons become convinced that they have been in a popular error, they are too apt to be pleased with the thought, that they have not been alone in the business; that men of all ranks have been equally deluded. This consideration may have influence with many, to prevent a thorough inquiry after the morality of a popular custom is called in question. On the same ground some may feel justified in neglecting to exert themselves to open the eyes of others, when they have become fully convinced that a custom is of a dangerous character. But it ought ever to be considered, that the more popular any vicious custom is, the more dreadful are its effects; and therefore



the more thorough should be our inquiries and our exertions.—  
 “Though the hand join in hand, the wicked shall not pass unpunished.”

Suppose I had discovered to my satisfaction, that a pretended remedy for the most dangerous disease had obtained circulation; that this supposed catholicon had destroyed thousands in past ages; and that by a popular recommendation, people of all ranks in this country, had been seduced to purchase the fatal poison; what would be my duty? Might I feel easy and hold my peace, because the error was so common, that people of every class were exposed to be destroyed? Common sense and humanity unite in saying, The more they are exposed, the more thorough and vigorous should be the efforts to save the lives of men.

It may indeed be less reproachful to be in a popular error, than in one which is unpopular; but it is not less dangerous. The more popular a malignant custom is, the more likely people are to be deluded by it to their own destruction. If duelling were as popular as war, it would probably destroy as many lives.

Therefore, as I feel the most perfect conviction that war is as murderous as duelling, or even as assassination—that millions of men have already been wantonly sacrificed by it—and that millions more are in danger of losing both their lives and their souls; it must be my duty to do what I can, to convince others of their danger, “whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear.” As in the case of discovering a popular poison I should be chargeable with inhumanity, and with the blood of my fellow men, if I should refuse to give information and warning; so it must be in the present case. If I must lose my character and my life by any voluntary effort, let it be in an attempt to save my fellow men, and not in an attempt to destroy them. We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren.” But—“whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer; and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.”

If by any means there might be produced in our country, as much zeal and exertion to preserve the blessing of peace, as we have seen in favor of war, how happy would be our prospects! If a tenth part of as much property as has been expended and destroyed in the late war, should be judiciously appropriated in Great Britain and the United States, in cultivating a spirit of peace, and exciting an abhorrence of war, the present tranquility between the



two nations would probably be as durable as their existence. "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" But how horrid to see them inflamed with hatred, and murdering one another, under the delusive idea that such is the road to glory and to heaven!

I cannot but feel tenderly for my former military companions. I know very well their love of glory; and should war become disreputable, they will be ready to exclaim, "Ye have taken away my gods, and what have I more!" They will, however, probably derive some support from this melancholy fact, that if the past popularity of war has been a delusion, it is one in which statesmen and clergymen were as deeply concerned as themselves; and that had it not been for the influence of others, they never would have adopted this sanguinary road to fame.—As the error has been common to people of all ranks, there is ample ground for mutual candor, mutual sympathy, and mutual efforts for a general reformation.

O that the time may be hastened, when christianity shall be exemplified in the lives of its professors. Then will be realized that blessedness, the prospect of which animated "a multitude of the heavenly host," while they sung, "Glory to God in the highest; on earth peace; and good will towards men."



## ADVERTISEMENT.

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WHEN a writer is conscious that in publishing a work opposed to a popular custom, he had for his object the honor of the christian religion and the happiness of the world; it must afford him pleasure to know that it has been favorably received by his fellow christians of different sects. Such pleasure has been enjoyed by the author of "A solemn review of the custom of War," in being informed that since its publication in this state, in the month of January last, it has gone through three large editions in different states: One in Connecticut, one in New York, and another in Philadelphia—the latter amounting to *twelve thousand* copies, for gratuitous distribution.

The writer has devoted six months to careful and almost incessant inquiries, in relation to the dreadful custom—its origin and popularity among christians—its causes, principles, and means of support—its tremendous havoc and miseries—its opposition to christianity—its moral influence on nations and individuals—and the means by which it may be abolished. The more he has examined the more he has been astonished that a custom so horrible has been so long popular among christians. For he has been more and more convinced, that it is in its nature perfectly hostile to the principles, the precepts, and the spirit of the christian religion. He is also confident, that such light may be offered on the subject, as will bring reflecting christians of every sect to this alternative—either to renounce christianity as a vile imposture, inconsistent with the best interests of mankind, or to renounce the custom of war, as indefensible and antichristian.

If the present work should be favorably received, and its design sufficiently patronized, it may be considered as the first of an intended series of Numbers, to be published *quarterly*, under the general title, *THE FRIEND OF PEACE*.

Should there be a second Number, it will probably contain a review of the popular arguments of Lord Kames in favour of war. And if a series of Numbers should be encouraged, the writer intends to assume the office of editor of the work, and to solicit the aid of ministers and other intelligent writers, without any discrimination of sect or party. As it is his intention to preclude from the Numbers the religious and political controversies, which have agitated societies in years past, and to introduce nothing to wound the feelings of candid and virtuous men of any class; he hopes that no sect of christians will deny their aid and patronage to a work, whose object is, *THE GOOD OF ALL*.

If the work shall assume the periodical form, its general motto will be, "GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST; ON EARTH PEACE; AND GOOD WILL TOWARDS MEN." And the public may expect that in strict accordance with the general title and motto, the work will be conducted.



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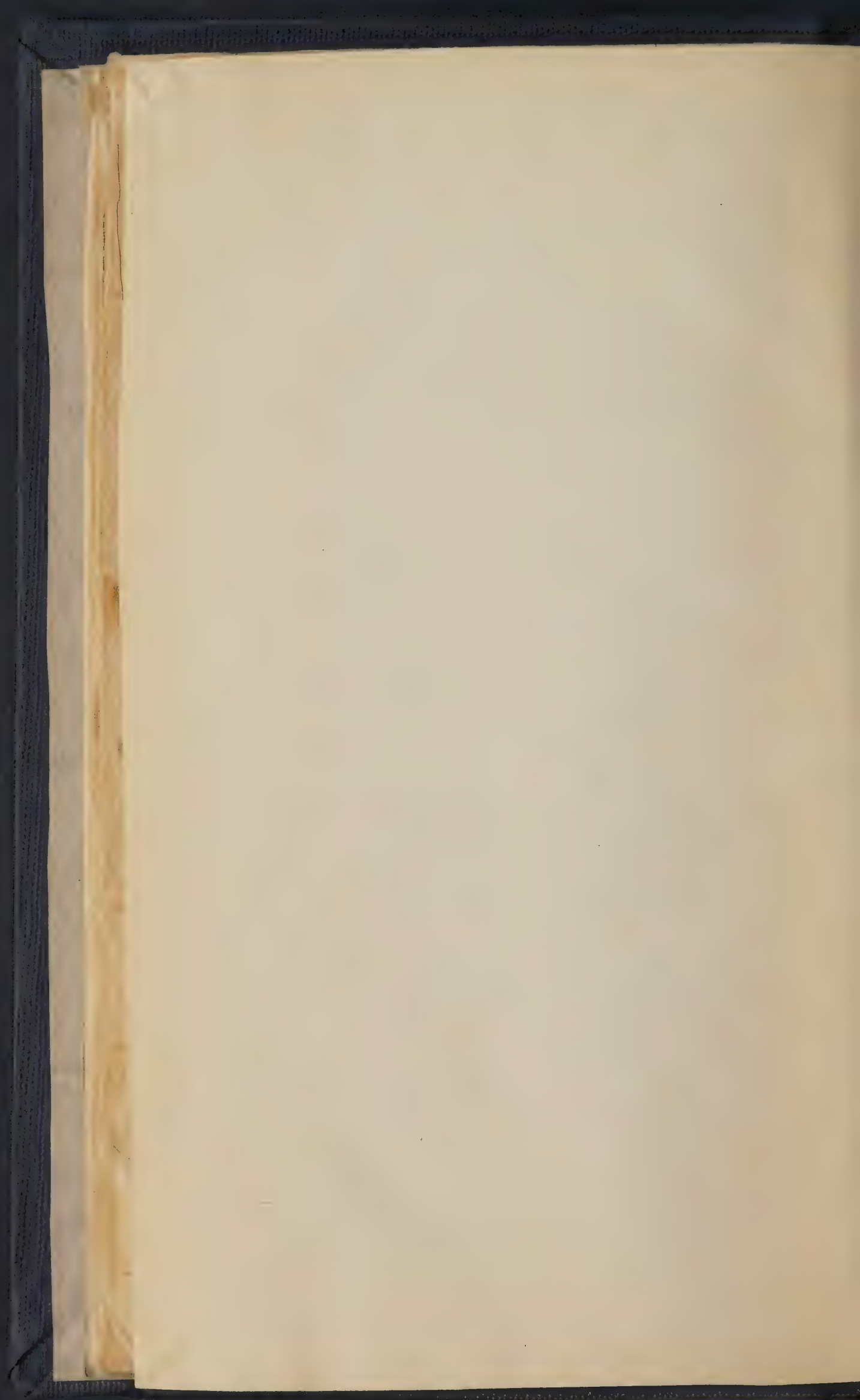
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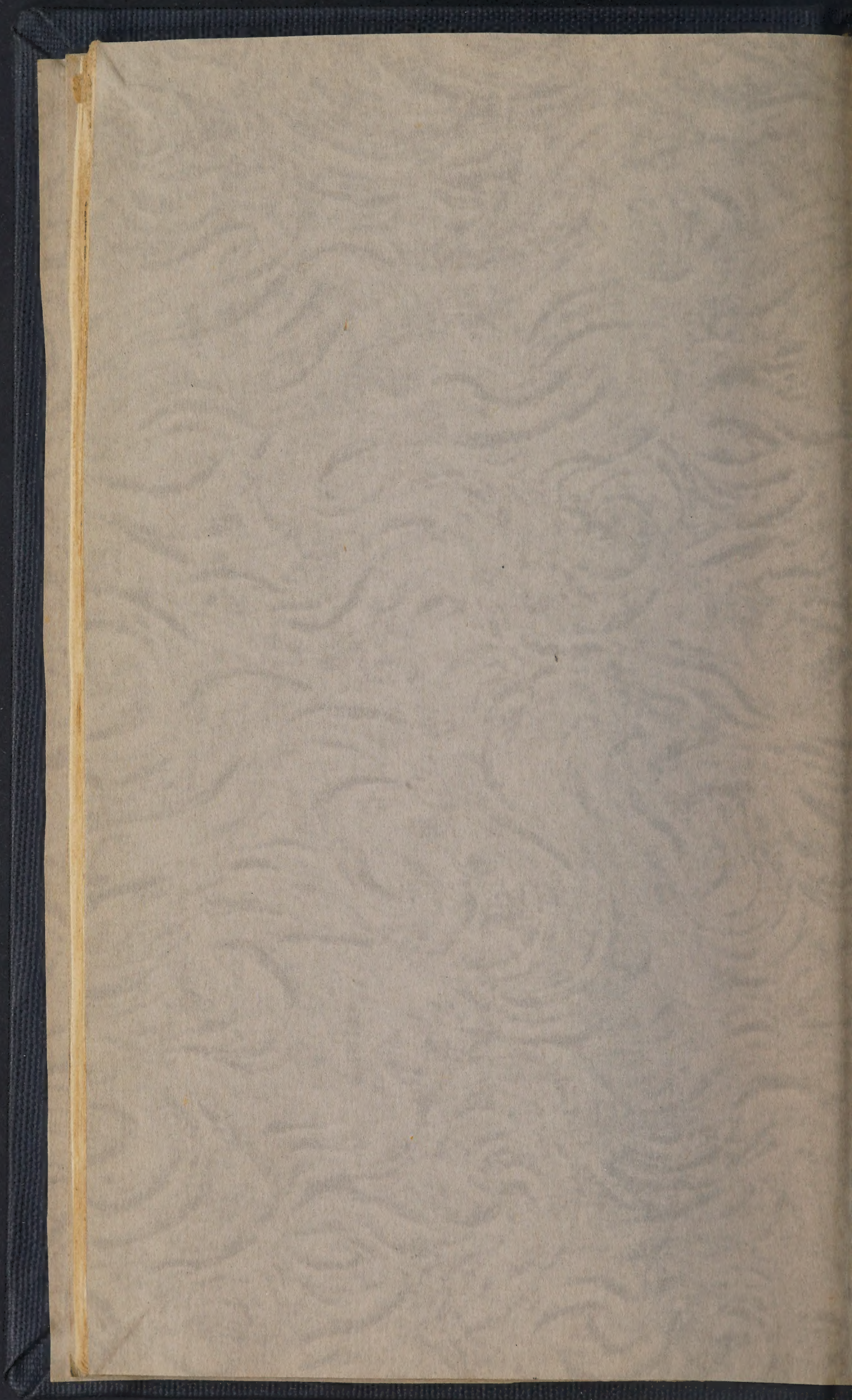














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